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ABSTRACT

Investigated with 17 special education practicum students was the effectiveness of structured experiences designed to foster interpersonal skill development. Administered as pre- and post-tests were the Helping Relationship Inventory, the Personal Orientation Inventory, and the Firo-B. Following a group workshop, the Ss differed significantly from a control group on utilization of the understanding and supportive response modes of the Helping Relationship Inventory and the scale assessing synergy on the Personal Orientation Inventory. The practicum instructor reported improved communication skills on an individual basis as compared with previous practicum students. (Author/IM)

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Interpersonal Skills Development With Special Education Practicum Students

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Abstract

Special Education practicum students were participated in structured experiences designed to faster interpersonal skill development. They were pre- and posttested on: The Helping Relationship Inventory, Personal Orientation Inventory and the Firo-B. A class of entry level special education students served as the control group. Results showed the experimental group to differ significantly after treatment on utilization of the understanding and supportive response modes of the Helping Relationship Inventory, and the scale assessing Synergy on the POI. The practicum instructor reported improved communication skills on an individual basis as compared with previous practicum students.

Interpersonal Skills Development With Special Education Practicum Students

A structured Interpersonal Skills Development workshop was designed for junior and senior level Special Education students entering the practicum phase of their program. A need was felt for this kind of training because of undergraduate difficulties and anxieties expressed by previous practicum students. The difficulties appeared to revolve around interpersonal communications with clients, other professional personnel, parents and even peers.

The workshop was designed to focus on self-disclosure, verbal expression of feelings, how to listen and respond effectively to others, non-verbal expression of feelings, awareness of strengths, confrontation techniques and resolving interpersonal conflicts.

In order to ascertain if the workshop made a difference the Special Education students in the introductory survey Special Education course were pre- and posttested as a control group (N = 11). The experimental group numbered 17.

The instruments utilized were: Helping Relationship Inventory, Personal Orientation Inventory (POI) and the Firo-B. The Helping Relationship Inventory was developed by selecting 25 items from the "Aptness of Response" section of the Counseling Procedures Pretest (Porter, 1950) and keyed for counseling response modes by three

judges. There are five scales: Understanding, Probing, Interpretative, Supportive and Evaluative. Split-half reliability for the scales ranges from .71 (Interpretative) to .96 (Understanding). Jones (1967) validated the scale by comparing counselors response modes with response modes of other occupational groups. (N = 370) These other occupations included: ministers, nursing instructors, housewives, undergraduate students and lawyers. Counselors were found to have a significant preference for the understanding response mode and least used the evaluative response mode while others demonstrated the reverse preference.

The Group Experiences consisted of seven sessions, each approximately 2 hours in length. The sessions met every day for a total of seven days. Goals for each session were explained at the beginning of the meeting and sessions were concluded by each student rating the session on a 9 point, four item, semantic differential scale. Each exercise also utilized "processing" i.e. discussions as to what was learned, feelings during the exercise and feelings after the exercise was over.

Table 1 presents the results of the pretests for the experimental and control groups. No significant differences were found between the two groups.

Insert Table 1 Here

Table 2 presents the results of the posttest for the

experimental group. Although none of the t's were significant at the .05 level, 5 scales showed significance beyond the .10 level and considerably closer to the .05 level than pretest results.

Insert Table 2 Here

The Helping Relationship was administered to experimental and control groups as pre-and posttests. However, only 5 of the control group returned usable answer sheets, therefore, only the pre- and posttests results for the experimental group are presented in Table 3. Since $n_1 = n_2$ and $_1^2 \neq {}_2^2$ the degrees of freedom were calculated as $n_1 - 1$ (Popham and Siratnik,1973). Two scales, understanding and supportive, showed significant change.

Insert Table 3 Here

Table 4 presents the pre- and posttest results of the POI and Firo-B for the experimental group. Only the scale measuring Synergy on the POI show a significant difference although scores on Inner Directed, Nature of Man, Capacity for Intimate Contact and Inclusion-expressed were significant between the .10 and .05 levels. The control group had only slight changes in pre-and posttest scores which could have been due to chance.

Insert Table 4 Here

Discussion

The workshop had to be held before the students started their practicum in the field. In addition, the practicum was an eight week summer course. Therefore, the structured group experiences were held every day for a week and a half. The encapulsing of the experiences may have caused differences not to become apparent because of the short time span. There should be time for internal processing of experiences and feelings before acceptance of new modes and thus may not show on paper and pencil tests for some time.

However, in spite of the short time frame, the experimental group did select more of the understanding response modes on the posttest which indicates a knowledge and willingness to utilize this response mode.

In addition, it is significant that the Special Education supervisor of the practicum students reported improved communication skills on an individual basis as compared with previous observations. Areas of noticeable improvement included Self-Disclosure, Constructive Confrontation, and Non-verbal expression of feelings.

References

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Table 1

Pretest Results on the POI and Firo-B

	Experimental Group		Control Group		
Scale - POI	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t
Time Incompetent	5.40	2.77	5.72	2.76	- .29
Time Competent	17.06	2.98	16.90	2.77	.13
Other Directed	40.46	10.37	42.09	5.76	- .46
Inner Directed	82.86	13.27	81.45	12.57	.27
Self-Actualizing Value	19.73	2.78	19.09	3.36	.53
Existentiality	19.86	4.96	17.90	4.76	1.00
Feeling Reactivity	15.33	3.15	14.90	2.91	.34
Spontaneity	12.06	3.63	12.45	2.62	- .30
Self-Regard	12.46	2.26	12.72	2.41	- .28
Self-Acceptance	14.73	3.82	15.09	3.30	- .24
Nature of Man	11.53	2.29	12.09	2.38	- .60
Synergy	6.60	1.88	6.9	1.30	- .46
Acceptance of Aggression	15.40	3.64	15.18	3.57	.15
Capacity for Intimate Contact	17.26	4.07	16.45	3.85	.51
Scale - Firo-B					
Inclusion-expressed	4.57	1.78	4.36	2.01	.27
Control-expressed	2.35	2.27	1.72	1.84	.74

Table 1 (cont'd)

	Experimental Group		Control Group		
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t
Affection-expressed	4.35	2.43	4.27	2.72	.08
Inclusion-wanted	3.35	2.70	3.54	4.20	- .13
Control-wanted	3.35	2.23	3.90	2.77	- .55
Affection-wanted	5.85	1.70	5.63	2.76	.24

Table 2

Posttest Results on the POI and Firo-B

	Experimental Group		Control Group		
Scale - POI	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t
Time Incompetent	5.00	2.44	6.27	2.83	-1.22
Time Competent	17.80	2.59	16.67	2.90	1.07
Other Directed	36.73	10.70	43.90	13.75	1.49
Inner Directed	89.13	10.89	82.54	14.02	1.34
Self-Actualizing Value	21.53	2.41	17.81	6.94	1.93
Existentiality	21.46	5.31	18.18	4.93	1.60
Feeling Reactivity	16.33	3.28	14.72	3.79	1.15
Spontaneity	13.33	3.15	12.72	2.93	.49
Self-Regard	12.73	2.25	12.63	2.37	.10
Self-Acceptance	16.26	3.61	16.09	2.98	.13
Nature of Man	12.53	1.76	11.72	2.19	1.03
Synergy	7.73	.96	7.00	1.26	1.68
Acceptance of Aggression	16.73	2.65	15.36	3.88	1.07
Capacity for Intimate Contact	19.53	3.44	16.63	4.50	1.86
Scale - Firo-B					
Inclusion-expressed	3.42	1.94	4.72	2.19	-1.56
Control-expressed	2.28	1.89	2.45	1.96	- .21

Table 2 (cont'd)

	Experimental Group		Control Group		
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t
Affection-expressed	4.28	2.94	3.90	2.70	.32
Inclusion-wanted	2.21	3.14	3.00	3.82	- .56
Control-wanted	2.92	2.36	3.63	2.73	- .69
Affection-wanted	5.50	1.91	5.09	2.46	.46

Table 3

Pre- and Posttest Results of the

Helping Relationship Inventory

	Pretest			Posttest			
Scale	$\bar{X}$	%ile	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	%ile	S.D.	t
Understanding	71.92	14	12.28	80.92	37	23.93	2.36*
Probing	68.84	45	12.06	74.69	23	14.37	-1.13
Interpretative	76.23	55	8.54	73.17	45	6.71	1.04
Supportive	77.69	90	7.95	87.38	66	10.61	-2.63*
Evaluative	80.30	80	12.96	88.92	67	13.36	-1.36

* Significant at the .05 level.

Table 4

Pre- and Posttest Results of the POI and Firo-B

	Experimental Group(Pretest)		Control Group(Posttest)		
Scale - POI	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t
Time Incompetent	5.40	2.77	5.00	2.44	.41
Time Competent	17.06	2.98	17.80	2.59	- .71
Other Directed	40.46	10.37	36.73	10.70	.97
Inner Directed	82.86	13.27	89.13	10.89	-1.41
Self-Actualizing Value	19.73	2.78	21.53	2.41	- .22
Existentiality	19.86	4.96	21.46	5.31	- .85
Feeling Reactivity	15.33	3.15	16.33	3.28	- .84
Spontaneity	12.06	3.63	13.33	3.15	-1.01
Self-Regard	12.46	2.26	12.73	2.25	- .32
Self-Acceptance	14.73	3.82	16.26	3.61	-1.12
Nature of Man	11.53	2.29	12.53	1.76	-1.33
Synergy	6.60	1.88	7.73	.96	-2.07*
Acceptance of Aggression	15.40	3.64	16.73	2.65	-1.14
Capacity for Intimate Contact	17.26	4.07	19.53	3.44	-1.64
Scale - Firo-B					
Inclusion-expressed	4.57	1.78	3.42	1.94	1.61
Control-expressed	2.35	2.27	2.28	1.89	.09

Table 4 (cont'd)

	Experimental Group (Pretest)		Control Group (Posttest)		
	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t
Affection-expressed	4.35	2.43	4.28	2.94	.06
Inclusion-wanted	3.35	2.70	2.21	3.14	1.03
Control-wanted	3.35	2.23	2.92	2.36	.49
Affection-wanted	5.85	1.70	5.50	1.91	.52

* Significant at the .05 level.